

The Unshaken Refuge

(Making an Unshakable Mind)

The main purpose of everyone is happiness. People work hard and do everything from birth to death in the name of happiness. Unfortunately, day by day people go away from happiness. The reason of this situation is we mostly trust in physical things and persons in outside which are impermanent. When those things and persons change, we suffer. According to Buddhism, our happiness or suffering completely depends on how far we have purified our mind. Mind generates our physical body. Mind is the main fact that our entire life activates and maintains. Mental condition decides whether we are happy or not. That is why Buddhism says;

*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā manoseṭṭhā manomayā;
Manasā ce paduṭṭhena bhāsati vā karoti vā;
Tato naṃ dukkhamanveti cakkamva vahato padaṃ.*

*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā manoseṭṭhā manomayā;
Manasā ce pasannena bhāsati vā karoti vā;
Tato naṃ sukhamanveti chāyāva anapāyinī.*

(Dhammapada)

"Mind is the forerunner, mind is the chief of all states. If someone speaks or acts with a wicked mind, suffering follows him because of the polluted mind, even as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught-ox. Simultaneously, if someone speaks or acts with a pure mind, happiness follows him, even as one's shadow that never leaves."

Mind makes our physical body. Also, mind controls our body. Mind decides what kind of body we have. Mind plays the main role in our entire life to keep us active and functional. Negative thoughts, such as cravings, anger, lust etc. collapse our happiness. In this situation, we have to purify our mind to the maximum level as much as possible for the peace of mind. Purified mind is the path that leads to our happiness. If we purify our mind from negative thoughts such as desire, anger, ill will, lust, jealousy etc., and also, if we can see the world wisely, then our mind is pure, calm, quiet and strong as well. Positive thoughts like loving kindness, compassion and generosity bolster peace in mind. If we do something with pure mind, then our mental, verbal and physical actions are also pure and correct. Meditation focuses on purifying the mind.

Developing the mind in a correct way, practicing meritorious thoughts such as loving kindness, compassion and understanding the world reality as it is, is meditation. By practicing meditation in Buddhism, we are trained to perceive our mind and body. First, Buddhist meditation aims to purify the mind from hindrances such as greed and anger, and then to understand the reality of the world, which leads to overcome suffering. The final goal of meditation that the Buddha mentioned is happiness which nobody or nothing can disturb our peace of mind.

The result which we gain practicing meditation is we won't have any severe attachments or conflicts about visual objects, sounds, smells, tastes, body impressions and thoughts, when we experience them through our senses which are eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind, it is.

Finally, we live in the present moment with full awareness and wisdom seeing arising and ceasing about our all experiences that we receive through our six senses.

Here it is very important to recognize the enemies who disturb our peace of mind. According to Buddhism, the real enemies are inside us, not in outside. They are negative thoughts. There are three main unwholesome roots which depends on all negative behaviors, words and thoughts. They are desire, anger and delusion. The genuine victory in our life is that winning these tree enemies. The everlasting happiness or liberation from suffering completely depends on reflecting on impermanence of body and mind. Therefore, the success of the spiritual life that getting rid of suffering is the duration of mindfulness in body and mind with reflecting on impermanence. Defeating delusion is better than defeating thousands of enemies in the battlefield.

Buddhism always emphasizes a gradual path that leads to overcome those negative thoughts. That path can be practiced by any one according to their knowledge, effort and intelligence. Practicing generosity is one of the ways to reduce desire, craving or attachment. Also, practicing loving kindness is one of the techniques to overcome anger or ill will. These are the primary techniques to get rid of desire and anger. However, the most server unwholesome thought is delusion which generates all negative thoughts, actions and worlds. Getting rid of delusion completely is the ultimate solution for getting rid of all negative thoughts. Therefore, the Buddha especially, points out the path of getting rid of suffering. Here it is very important to recognize the process of arising and ceasing of suffering.

When our eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind contact with external objects such as forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch, mental formations, the experience arises at the moment. Simultaneously, five aggregates arise when a sense contacts with an object and mind. Five aggregates are: matter (Rupa - රූප), feelings (*Vedanā* - වේදනා), perception (*Saññā* - සංකල්පනා), mental formations (*Sankhāra* - සංඛාර) and consciousness (*Viññāna* - විඤ්ඤාණ). Five aggregates are always together. They can't be separated. They could be realized by wisdom. These five aggregates are the bottom line of all our experiences which we receive through our senses. The nature of these five aggregates is that they weren't there before the experience. And also, they won't remain after the experience.

If someone doesn't know this reality, his mind is fixed in outside things and persons trusting in the permanence of them. When they change, he suffers. If someone experiences something trough senses, if his mind is fixed in outside, he is not away from suffering like aging, sickness, separation, death and rebirth. Also, if an intelligent person needs to avoid those sufferings, he compulsory has to comprehend this reality and develop the wisdom which consists of mindfulness and reflecting on impermanence.

Understanding the dependent origination directly focuses on comprehension of five aggregates. The Buddha advises everyone who are in every spiritual level to reflect on five aggregates as arising, ceasing, enjoyment, danger and liberation. Every moment five aggregates arise when conditions are together. Also, they immediately cease when conditions separate. There is an enjoyment in these five things, but enjoyment is less, danger is lot. That is why wise people

must find liberation from five aggregates. The Buddha says the highest education that a wise person should gain is the comprehension of five aggregates.

As a result of the union of the five aggregates, when factors are together, we have experiences through our senses such as eye, ear, nose, tongue, body. When factors (or conditions) are separated, the experience ceases. The highest intelligence that Buddhism declares is the intelligence that "Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not go to (the future) occurrence" (*Ahutvā sambhutam hutvā na bhavissati* - අනුත්ථො සම්භුතං හුත්ථො න භවිස්සති). If someone can understand this ultimate truth practicing insight meditation, that is the only way to get rid of suffering. This is the main teaching that the Buddha realized, discovered and preached to the world to get rid of suffering. The Buddha has explained this theory in various ways in his teachings like this;

When this is, that is (*Asmin sati idam hoti*)

This arising, that arises (*Imassa Uppādā idam uppajjati*)

When this is not, that is not (*Asmin asati idam na hoti*)

This ceasing, that ceases (*Imassa nirodhā idam nirujjhati*)

Seeing this reality helps to contemplate on body and mind. When someone sees this nature of life, he sees only thing that life has is impermanence. Every moment the process of life which consists with five aggregates arises and ceases.

At the very beginning of the path of liberation, according to above theory, we should have a clear knowledge of what we practice and where we go to. That is why the Buddha say; I declare the cessation of suffering for those who knows and sees the Dhamma. Here understanding of the Dependent Origination (*Paticcasamuppāda*) is very important. Understanding Buddhism depends on understanding the Dependent Origination.

He who sees the Dependent Origination sees the Dhamma
(*Yo paticcasamuppādam passati so dhamma passati*)

Ho who sees the Dhamma sees the Buddha
(*Yo dhamma passati so mam passati*)

This is the real way to see the Dhamma and the Buddha as well. Hence the Dependent Origination is like the heart of Buddhism.

After this understanding, the intelligent person starts his spiritual journey as soon as possible. Once the supreme Buddha explained the deliverance path in short in a stanza.

*“Sīle patiṭṭhāya naro sapañño Cittam paññañca bhāvayaṃ;
Ātāpī nipako bhikkhu So imaṃ vijaṭaye jaṭaṃ”.*

A man established in virtue, discerning,
developing mind & wisdom,
a monk ardent, astute:
he can untangle this tangle.

This spiritual path is emphasized by the Supreme Buddha in three steps as three characteristics. They are;

1. Virtue
2. Concentration
3. Wisdom.

Virtue means the discipline in speech and behavior. Keeping mind calm and tranquil using meditation techniques like loving kindness is concentration. Reflecting on impermanence of body and mind is wisdom. As the result of this path finally the wise person sees only arising and ceasing in all his experiences. This is the nature of wisdom. Also, he doesn't see anything away from this impermanence. The foundation of these three steps is mindfulness.

All Buddhist teachings can be included into one topic that is mindfulness. Our spiritual success and real happiness depend on how far we have practiced mindfulness in our lives. Practicing Buddhism means practicing mental culture. Practicing mental culture means practicing mindfulness. Also, practicing mindfulness means practicing happiness. Finally, we can say very clearly practicing all teachings of the Buddha means practicing mindfulness. The entire dispensation of the Buddha depends on practicing mindfulness. Hence mindfulness is highly appreciated in Buddhism.

That is why Buddhism illustrates the one and only way;

for the purification of beings (*Sattānam visuddhiyā*),

for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation (*sokapariddavānam samatikkhamāya*),

for the destruction of pain and grief (*dukkhadomanassānam attamgamāya*),

for the gaining of wisdom (*ñāyassa adhigamāya*)

for the attaining or realization of Nibbana or enlightenment (*nibbānassa sacchikiriya*)

which is practicing the fourfold mindfulness.

The Satipatthāna Sutta deals with the fourfold development of 'Sati', mindfulness and 'Patthāna', establishment or practice. So 'Satipatthāna' means establishment of mindfulness. The main purpose of practicing mindfulness is to investigate what happens to our mind and body and finally understanding our whole life. If we can clearly understand the process of our life as it is, we can overcome all sufferings in our day to day life and in whole Sansāric journey.

Here it is said the four types of areas where we practice mindfulness. They are;

- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of the body (*Kāyānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of sensation or feelings (*Vedanānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of mind (*Cittānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of mind-objects (*Dhammānupassanā*)

According to practicing mindfulness in these four areas, our attention and awareness are gradually developed about our body and mind. And we practice to live in the present moment consciously. We mostly suffer because of the past or the future. If we lose our attention with mindfulness about the present, it means we lose our happiness. That is why Buddhism emphasizes the importance of developing mindfulness.

As the result of practicing mindfulness with the understanding of the dependent origination, wisdom or right vision gradually increases. The nature of wisdom is to reduce desire, anger and all other defilements which disturb peace of mind. Whenever someone lives in mindfulness, he is away from suffering. Living in mindfulness is like living in the field of the father, the Buddha. On the other hand, whenever we are unhappy, it means we are away from mindfulness and in the field of the Mara, devil. Therefore, living in mindfulness is the real protection in our life.

Wisdom or intelligence, which mainly helps us to overcome suffering and attain liberation from defilements, is highly praised in Buddhism. The main cause whether we are happy is the level of our wisdom. Our real success depends on how much we have achieved wisdom. Hence, wisdom has been compared to a Gem of Men (පඤ්ඤා නරානං රතන). Wisdom brings purification (පඤ්ඤාය පරිසුච්ඤති). There is no other bright light like wisdom (නන්ථි පඤ්ඤා සමා ආභා). Wisdom is used in several terms in Pali language such as Sammā Ditti (සමමා දිට්ඨි), paññā (පඤ්ඤා), Amoha (අමෝහ). Wisdom can be developed from the beginning to the maximum level in the path of enlightenment. Therefore, Buddhism always guides us to gain wisdom through all kinds of advices that the supreme Buddha explained in his entire life. The Buddha says; **living on a day seeing impermanence is better than living hundred years without seen this reality.**

As the result of the development of the three characteristics, the intelligent one depends on his wisdom not in outside persons or things or his ordinary shaken mind, but he makes a stable refuge throughout practicing Dhamma. This is the perfect secure that we can achieve in our lifetime. In this spiritual development, someone can live without anger among the people those who are angry. Also, he lives without greed among greedy people.

Dwell with yourselves as an island, with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge; dwell with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge.

*Atta deepā bhikkhave viharatha atta saranā na añña saranā,
Dhamma deepā bhikkhave dhamma saranā na añña saranā.*

May the Triple Gem Bless you!

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May all beings be well happy and peaceful!

(වෙත්වා! සවිසත හැමකල් සුවපත්)

(Tuesday Dhamma Discussion of Los Angeles Buddhist Vihara in Pasadena. 11/14/2017)